An annotated bibliography is a list of citations, each followed by a brief paragraph that briefly summarizes the article (usually about 150 words). The following is an example of an annotated citation:


The author attempts to ascertain whether it is possible for an individual to live on a minimum-wage in America today. Taking jobs as a waitress, a maid, and a sales employee, Ehrenreich reflects on her work, her relationships with fellow workers, and her financial struggles in each situation. The author is aware of the limitations of her experiment and the ethical implications of her experiential research tactics. She is clear about her methods and supplements her experiences with scholarly research on her places of employment, the economy, and the rising cost of living in America. This book is timely, descriptive, and well-researched.

For the purpose of this assignment your annotations should briefly summarize the relevance of the articles you select to your proposed MA project. Answer the question "How do the arguments, concepts, data and conclusions in the article relate to my project?" To do this you will need to have worked out a well defined project organized around a central working thesis.

Creating a good annotated bibliography also requires you to demonstrate a number of skills including research, analysis, synthesis and succinct summation. If done well the result will be a valuable resource that you can continue to update, modify and ultimately incorporate into you MA project.

1. **FIND**. Start by locating 20-30 journal articles that are as closely related to your topic and region as you can find. Use the campus library and online resources such as ERIC, Google Scholar, HeinOnline, JSTOR, Muse, Questia, ScienceDirect and Virtual Health Library. Many of these resources are free if you access them from campus. Try different search words and phrases. When you find a search phrase that works on one database try it on the others.

During your search pay special attention to Annual Review articles and other recent summary works by major scholars in your field. These articles are often valuable because they link issues or provide more than one perspective on a single issue.

When you find a good article don't forget to ransack the bibliography and pillage footnotes with gusto. Keep a running list of any interesting new sources that you find in the process.

At this stage you will probably be better of focusing on substantive articles. Try to avoid getting bogged down in purely theoretical or methodological articles. See the tragedy at the tar pit.

2. **RANK** the quality of each article. Your ranking system should take into account how closely the article matches your analytical approach, topic and region. You may want to give some added weight to more recent articles. Read the conclusion first then glance at the introduction and outline. Spend 10-15 minutes looking each article over. Jot down any reaction you have to it. Rank it and move on to the next article.

3. **SELECT**. Narrow your selection down to the 10 articles you want to read more carefully. Ideally these will be substantive articles that deal directly with your themes and region in ways that you think will be helpful. If you haven't already printed out your own hard copy of each article you may want to do so. This way you can mark the article up as you read. Your own margin notes are valuable reminders worth saving.
4. **READ.** Carefully read, analyze and take notes on each of the 10 articles you have selected. Open a new Word document for each article. Write out a full bibliographic citation in the proper format. Summarize the main argument, key concepts, evidence and conclusions. As you read, extract useful quotes and examples and note their page numbers. Summarize the aspects of article you think will be most useful to you and explain why. If in the process of reading you find the article is not what you thought it was, or is simply not interesting to you for other reasons, then stop reading and replace that article with one that you think will be more helpful. Create a filing system that will allow you to retrieve your detailed article notes in the future.

5. **ANNOTATE.** Drawing on your detailed notes write a concise annotation that summarizes how the arguments, concepts, data and conclusions of the article are relevant to your work.

6. **FINISH.** Copy all 10 citations with annotations (not the detailed notes) into a new document. Add a paragraph or two at the top describing the focus of the bibliography. Be sure to include the clearest possible statement of your central argument and any new questions that came up along the way. Add the list of the interesting new sources you found during this exercise to the bottom of the bibliography. Format, spell check and submit the assignment.

**Note:** You should keep the copies of the articles you read with your notes scribbled in the margins, your detailed typewritten notes on each article, as well as the finished annotated bibliography. You may want to add to this bibliography when you encounter new sources relevant to that topic. As your thesis develops you may need to re-organize your bibliography by topic or specific research question. Eventually you may want to split off sections into new annotated bibliographies. It may be hard to believe but you could find yourself returning to this annotated bibliography over and over again, forever. In the worst case scenario you could find yourself years from now, with your hair graying, teaching this stuff to a bunch of freaked out graduate students. Heaven forbid. ☺️